ELECTRONIC RESOURCES REVIEWS

Connotea. Nature Publishing Group, 4 Crinan Street, London, N1 9XW, United Kingdom; connotea@nature.com; http://www.connotea.org; free website.

Connotea, the Nature Publishing Group's answer to del.icio.us <http://del.icio.us>, is an online social bookmarking tool designed for scientists. Instead of managing general bookmarks, however, Connotea exists to manage references and collections of scientific articles. Because it is a social tool, the references that a Connotea user bookmarks are public and can be shared with colleagues and workgroups across the world.

For those familiar with other social bookmarking tools, using Connotea poses few challenges. Even those not familiar with social bookmarking tools can get a Connotea account up and running in a matter of minutes. Once users set up a personal account (a simple procedure requiring only a name, username, password, and email address), they can install a ''browser button,'' a bookmarklet that enables users to add citations to Connotea in one click. Browser buttons are available for Firefox, Internet Explorer, and Safari. In the advanced account options, users can associate their Connotea account with their institution's OpenURL server to improve access to full-text content.

Users can add references to Connotea in several ways. The easiest is the aforementioned browser button. From any web page, clicking the browser button opens a pop-up window where users can add tags (or keywords), a description, or comments and mark a bookmark private. Single or multi-word tags are possible. A generic form is also available for saving citations to Connotea—the form even allows users to simply enter a digital object identifier (DOI) number to instantly bookmark the corresponding full-text article. Users can also batch upload citations from standard bibliographic management tools like EndNote; Firefox bookmarks; and BibTex, RIS, or MODS files. Only citations with associated uniform resource locators (URLs) will be imported, however.

As with other social bookmarking tools, users can see information on other users who bookmarked each resource. It is also easy to find new resources by browsing tags and related users. A tag cloud of that day's most popular tags is a good place to start browsing. The main Nature.com website also lists a few of the day's most popular tags. Each tag, user, and tag-and-user combination has an associated really simple syndication (RSS) feed for easy tracking. Standard URL syntax makes creating complex RSS feeds easy. For example, to create an RSS feed for new Connotea items from either user ''ben'' or ''timo'' with the tags ''connotea'' and ''npg,'' the URL would be http://www.connotea.org/rss/user/ben/timo/tag/connotea+npg.

To enhance sharing of references among colleagues and peers, Connotea developed a group feature. Any user can create a public or private group, and all group members' new citations are added automatically to the group account. Users have requested an upgrade to Connotea that would allow individuals to send only select bookmarks to the groups to which they belong. There is no networking feature comparable to the del.icio.us network, so the only way to track individuals' new bookmarks is via RSS.

To work as a reference manager and not just another social bookmarking tool, Connotea stores complete citation information for journal articles, books, blogs, and other reference types. For many common or science-oriented websites, Connotea automatically captures and parses the bibliographic metadata associated with journal articles, books, and blogs. Examples of sites with automatically captured metadata include Nature.com, Amazon, PubMed, BioMed Central, arXiv, PLoS, and Wiley Interscience. When bookmarking a resource without automated metadata capture, the form allows users to input complete citation information themselves. This level of metadata makes it easy to export any Connotea library into another bibliographic management tool.

Connotea, like del.icio.us, encourages developers to create new tools and enhancements for Connotea users using the Connotea application programming interface [1]. Many user-created tools are Greasemonkey scripts (Firefox only), though non-Firefox users can find several useful tools as well. A large number of developed tools are designed to integrate Connotea into PubMed, varying from PubMed search tools customized for Connotea users (Connotea Client), to a tool that puts ''Add to Connotea'' links in each PubMed record (PubMed2Connotea), to a tool that alerts PubMed searchers to citations that have been bookmarked in Connotea (PubConn). One particularly interesting tool is Entity Describer, a pair of Greasemonkey scripts designed to help users make use of controlled vocabularies like Medical Subject Headings when bookmarking. Connotea's source code is also available for download and modification under a GNU general public license.

Connotea's only major competition in the social reference management market is CiteULike, a similar tool designed largely for humanities scholars. CiteULike's major benefit over Connotea is portable document format (PDF) storage: users can upload their PDF files to CiteULike and access them from anywhere. Basic social bookmarking sites and del.icio.us do not have the metadata capabilities that Connotea does, so for the scholar, Connotea may be a better tool. Its focus on scientists and researchers also means that medical library clientele will be more likely to find peers and colleagues to track or collaborate with in Connotea than in another social bookmarking service.

Overall, Connotea is a very easy, time-saving way for scientists, researchers, and medical librarians to keep track of and discover the literature they need.

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Reference

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Athens Access Management. Eduserv Athens, Queen Anne House, 11 Charlotte Street, Bath, BA1 2NE, United Kingdom, athenssales@eduserv.org.uk; http://www.athensams.net; contact for pricing.

Many academic medical libraries have the ability to authenticate their patrons using Internet protocol (IP) ranges or proxy servers. However, many hospital libraries are unable to use IP verification or establish proxy servers. The only way for these librarians and their patrons to access online resources is through user names and passwords. Usually, this means distributing multiple different passwords for many resources to patrons, often leading to more confusion.

Athens Classic Access Management System gives these hospital libraries the ability to provide off-site access to resources without the need to manage and distribute multiple user names and passwords for multiple resources. Athens Access Management System is a service of Eduserv Technologies and was developed in 1994. The UK higher education community has used it since 1996, the UK National Health Services has used it since 2000, and its use in the United States began to emerge 2006.

Athens Classic service operates similar to other access management programs, like Shibboleth, in the sense that both serve as a way to provide authenticated access to protected online resources. However, Athens Classic is a managed service providing a directory and comprehensive management tools for the librarian to administer users and resources. It also offers single sign-on and a simple access portal called MyAthens. Unlike with proxy server access and Shibboleth, no installation or additional hardware is required for libraries to use Athens. All the librarian has to maintain are the patron and resource databases.

Once a library subscribes to Athens, it is given an Athens ID number that the librarian then gives to the online database and journal providers. Many online content providers are Athens enabled, including Ovid, EBSCO, Gale, Elsevier, American Medical Association, and BMJ Publishing. A full list can be found at http://www.athensams.net/dsp/. While the list is large, not all vendors are Athens accessible. Librarians must contact each subscribed online resource and ask that they activate Athens authentication for off-site access. While this is done only once during set up, it can be a rather time-consuming task, depending on the number of online resources a library subscribes to. While it is a simple process for most databases, the task seems to be more cumbersome with online journal publishers and providers. This is because libraries usually own more journals than databases and because the appropriate and knowledgeable contact person is often difficult to reach. Unfortunately at the present time, there is not an easier more streamlined method for establishing Athens access to library resources.

Librarians must also set up and maintain their patron database in Athens. Librarians can populate the patron database in several ways: local authentication system, bulk upload, manually, or patron self-registration. All patrons in the database are given their own unique username and password, which is used to log into the library's online resources. Libraries serving multiple unaffiliated populations will be interested in creating permission sets. A permission set defines the set of resources that specific users have permission to access using their Athens account. For example, a library serving two hospitals would be able to create user subgroups, allowing employees access only to their own hospital's online resources.

Once library patrons are added to the database, they are able to view their account and accessible online library resources using the MyAthens portal as well as the MyAthens toolbar application, which can be downloaded and installed on Internet Explorer or Firefox browsers. These help patrons use Athen's single sign-on feature, enabling them to conduct research without the need to constantly log in to each resource. The MyAthens portal can be customized by both the patron and the librarian. The librarian controls naming of the resource and its description, while patrons can customize it by moving panels and grouping favorite resources. Cross-searching online resources is not yet available to patrons on MyAthens, but Athens is investigating it for possible future use. However, librarians might find that the library website is still the best location for listing online resources for patrons. Patrons can also go directly to a resource and log in using their Athens username and password. However, they should be reminded to always click on the Athens login link on the resources page. Often patrons forget to click on this link and try to log in directly to the resources, not to Athens, often causing the resource to deny access. This is often a source of frustration among patrons who erroneously think the resource login page is the correct page to input their username password, instead of using the Athens login page. Even if they remember to click on the Athens login, that link can be anywhere on the resource's page as there is no standardized location for it.

Despite some of these drawbacks, Athens is ideal for hospital libraries to provide their patrons the privilege of using the online resources from campus. Patrons already inundated with multiple usernames and passwords in their daily lives will be happy to have only their own personal Athens log in and password for using the library's online products. Using the Athens Access Management System, librarians can now reach pa-

trons regardless of where they access the Internet.

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ILLiad, the interlibrary loan management software marketed by the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), was first reviewed in this journal in July 2003 [1]. Basic information about the program and its development in that review is still valid. This new review deals with aspects of the program that were not covered by the earlier review or that have changed considerably since then.

Atlas Systems is the authorized service, training, and development division of OCLC ILLiad. It actively updates the ILLiad software with significant improvements every one to two years. The version used for this review is 7.2, issued in January 2007. Atlas plans to release version 7.3 in January of 2008 and hopes to have version 8.0 available by the end of 2008.

Reporting features

A major feature of ILLiad that was not previously reviewed is the reporting function. As soon as ILLiad is set up and data are collected, versatile reports (described more fully below) are available. These built-in web-based reports provide a variety of statistical data. Interlibrary loan (ILL) staff can also create groups in the client to get more detailed and tailored information for existing reports, and most reports are accompanied with graphic charts to visually present data distribution or trends. Advanced users can query the ILLiad database through Microsoft Access to produce even more specific or highly customized reports.

With each system upgrade, more report options have been added and report queries have been tested, modified, and updated based on user feedback. Currently, the system generates reports from the borrowing, lending, and document delivery modules in ILLiad, as well as miscellaneous administrative reports, such as monthly billing. The customizable reports that the Eskind Biomedical Library (EBL) frequently uses are fill rate statistics, requests finished and cancelled, libraries EBL loaned to and borrowed from, copyright statistics, filled and unfilled requests, and journals filled most frequently. ILLiad also provides a direct linkage to the Copyright Clearance Center, automating the tracking of journal usage and copyright compliance.

Hosting options

ILLiad's flexibility makes it adaptable for a variety of environments. First, the system can be hosted either by the implementing library or Atlas Systems. Hosting ILLiad at the library requires staff who understand network connectivity and security issues and are familiar with Microsoft SQL server, Windows Server, and Internet Information Service (IIS) setup. Small libraries with less technical support can choose to utilize the hosting service, at an additional cost, with Atlas bearing responsibility for the web administration. The system can be used by just one site or shared among branch libraries.

With a centralized implementation, the system allows multiple pick-up locations, using a streamlined application interface at each pick-up point for tracking items.

Web interface

The flexibility of ILLiad is also demonstrated by its web interfaces. The latest version utilizes a cascading style sheet (CSS) template for its web interface, giving end users more control over the web page presentation. In addition to the web interface, all communication emails and labels are customizable. The basic customization is done using the Customization Manager program with parameters that can be site specific. More advanced customization can be done by editing the vendor-supplied web page, email, and printing templates. Editing templates requires understanding the ILLiad tags, button text, and field validation. With some basic knowledge of hypertext markup language (HTML) and CSS, this editing is fairly easy to accomplish.

Included with version 7.2 of ILLiad is a web page preview tool, which provides an immediate view of changes made to ILLiad web pages. The web previewer tool replaces ILLiad-specific tags with sample values to render an intuitive visual picture of customized web pages without parsing the web templates through the server. In addition, a test folder can now be added to the production web server, enabling testing of web pages with live data without affecting the production server. Both tools serve as visual aids that significantly speed up and simplify the customization procedure.

ILLiad version 7.2 also features improved web authentication. Five different authentication methods are available [2], and the authentication schemes can be combined to deal with exceptions. This simplifies the integration of ILLiad with existing user management systems. The new version also makes email security possible by using the

Email Manager to send ILLiad-related emails from a single Internet protocol (IP) address.

Limitations

Even with all its improvements, ILLiad still has areas for potential improvement, such as with the billing management system. Although the Billing Manager allows the posting of payments, it has limited accounting capability. Most importantly for health sciences libraries, ILLiad still lacks a direct connection with DOCLINE and Loansome Doc. Changes since the last review have improved the interface, but updates still need to be done manually in the DOCLINE system after the lending requests have been filled in the ILLiad system. According to information released by OCLC, version 8 will further improve ILLiad-DOCLINE integration. The reviewers eagerly await these new developments.

Conclusion

Overall, the EBL's experience with ILLiad has been quite positive. In particular, the reporting features greatly reduce staff time spent on statistics, as the reports are well displayed, are easy to understand, and provide better data than manual counts. It used to take EBL staff one to two days each month to categorize requests to prepare reports for library administration. Now these same reports, as well as previously unavailable analyses, can be generated when needed within minutes. These reports have given staff better insight into workload and have helped improve departmental workflow. This, combined with the customization features, has made ILLiad an invaluable tool for the ILL process.

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